II.—THE LINE OF ADVANCE IN PHILOSOPHY.

By HENRY STURT.

IT will seem unusual and perhaps even presumptuous to attempt to indicate the line along which philosophy is to develop in the immediate future. In the past thinkers have made advances without any clear notion whither they were going; and it has been left for historians to point out the logical connection of one stage with another. But I do not see why philosophy in this more self-conscious age should not advance self-consciously—why it should not choose a definite line and try to get further by it. It is rather characteristic of contemporary thinking to make such a deliberate choice, well aware that the standpoint chosen is neither all-comprehensive or final. The old philosophers were haunted by the phantom of finality; each great system-maker dreamed that his system was the term in which the human mind would at last find rest. We have flung away finality. We confess, indeed desire, that our synthesis, into which we put our best just now, may have its chief use in leading on to the ampler syntheses of the future.

The line of advance which I should like philosophy to take, and which I believe it actually will take, consists primarily in recognising more fully than hitherto the importance of striving in human experience. If this be so, the philosophy of the future will be a form of Voluntarism, but it will differ not inconsiderably from the forms of the past. The striving I have in view is not the impersonal cosmic striving of Schopenhauer and his followers, but the personal striving which is known to us by introspection and by common observation of the people around us. So far from being a blind irrational force, it has the

consciousness which belongs to human purpose, and it grows in rationality as our purposes grow clearer. And on another side the line of thought I advocate differs from a subjectivist voluntarism like that of Fichte in its view of the objective world. It accepts the scientific position that we live in a world of forces which act upon us, some of which we strive to direct to the furtherance of our own purposes.

The establishment of a philosophy of striving would amount to a revolution of English thought, because the philosophy still dominant among us is based on principles which ignore the kinetic and dynamic element in nature and man. The tendency still exists to speak of nature as though it were statical in essence, however mutable it might appear. In early thought such a tendency can be easily explained. Science is based on the discovery of uniformities in the flux of phenomena; and this predisposed the early thinkers to concentrate attention upon the uniformities, to emphasise them as the true realities, and to speak slightingly of the mutable concrete facts as unreal. No less statical in reality, though in appearance recognising movement, is the dominant conception of the human spirit. We have, it is true, got rid of the wax-tablet theory which left man no function in forming his own thoughts. But are the current principles any real improvement? Professor Bosanquet's favourite phrase, the self-determination of thought, seems to countenance the Hegelian doctrine of category spinning itself out from category by an inherent necessity or immanent dialectic. Mr. Bradley's doctrine of the self-realisation of ideas seems to make the mind a mere playground for alien creatures, called ideas, to disport themselves in. Is it possible to ignore more completely the most important features of man, of his environment, and of the relation between them?

When we once have grasped the principle, so indispensable for science, that there are permanent, or at least persistent, uniformities in material nature, there is no need to shrink from recognising that, in its concrete presentation, it consists

of things constantly in motion and charged with force. Natural forces are constantly impinging on us: they destroy us if we do not react against them, and they are capable of being diverted to serve our ends. And the self, on the other hand, is not an impressionable wax-tablet or an empty playground or a chain of categories. It is a creative force, different in kind from material forces, yet capable of interacting with them: and it develops not merely logically but practically (if such an antithesis is possible) by conative interaction with the material environment and with other selves. This characteristic of striving never entirely ceases in each man's life, so long as he is fully himself: and every important concept, every important function of his nature, is penetrated by it through and through.

It is in developing the significance of striving over the whole field of thought that the advance I anticipate will be accomplished. To enunciate a wide-reaching general principle is easy enough; the great achievement is its application in detail. If Voluntarism were applied in detail it would change everything that the dominant school of thought now takes for granted. The effect of such a change would be, as I believe, to bring philosophy much nearer to reality, and to dispel that unfortunate air of paradox which has clung to philosophy for ages, but of which few understand the secret.

It may clear up still further the import of this form of voluntarism if I mention what I regard as its philosophic antecedents. The first is Idealism, as that term has been understood in Oxford for the last 40 years or so. Fluctuating as its meaning is, I think that this term means to most of us who use it nothing more dogmatically definite than that the world is to be interpreted by spirit rather than by matter. I do not use it to imply any "cheap and easy" reduction of matter to spirit; but I do imply that, if we are to have a monism, it must be spiritual, not materialistic like Haeckel's. Taking this view, I would be understood to concur with the

main points of T. H. Green's defensive argument against the naturalism of his day, by which he shows that the higher human activities in knowledge and morality exhibit a principle incapable of being resolved into what, in his language, is "merely natural."* I may remark in passing that the importance of Green's work in this direction lay, not so much in providing a set demonstration of a spiritual world-view, as in dissipating the prejudice in favour of materialism which is inevitable in an age preoccupied with material science. Such a prejudice is always strong in men whose habit of thinking in material categories has not been corrected by philosophic training; but it tends to disappear when men have been trained to introspection and have come to see that material categories are inadequate to mind.

The other antecedent to which I would attach myself is the scientific doctrine of Development, with its biological formulæ of adaptation to environment, struggle for existence and survival of the fittest. The naturalists have taught us that the forms of life are not persistent, but mutable like all other mundane things; and that their mutability, though partly due to the external pressure and selection of nature, is due also to the striving of living things to maintain and extend their life. From biology the doctrine of Development has been extended into anthropology; and the extension is justifiable, since far-sighted purpose and the higher activities generally do not count for much in the sum total of savage life. But the doctrine of Development may be applied to the most spiritual elements of our life, provided always we remember that we are on a plane above biology, and that the striving which is the mainspring of the development is here far-sighted and purposeful.

To those who hold firmly both to Idealism and scientific Development, a form of Voluntarism is certainly the best solution of obvious difficulties. The late Professor Ritchie's attempt to exhibit Hegel as the "truth" of Darwin only shows

more plainly the impossibility of reconciling the non-dynamic, self-contained thought-development of Dialectic with the dynamic interaction of self and the world postulated by Science. If we take modern science seriously we must either hold that the self is the product of its selfless environment, or we must hold that the self makes its own characteristic contribution to the sum of experience. The first alternative is forbidden by Idealism, and if we accept the second we have implicitly accepted Voluntarism. The self must be regarded as a force able to play its own part in striving with the world; and, as it grows, its striving must exhibit more and more the characteristic qualities of its own nature; in other words, it must grow increasingly self-conscious and purposeful.

In philosophy, as in cookery, the proof of the pudding is in the eating; or, to return from culinary metaphor to military, the justification of a line of advance is the conquest which results from it. Now, in a short anticipatory paper like the present, conquest is not to be thought of; and my argument must therefore lack its proper proof. Nevertheless, enough work has been done recently to give an indication, however scanty, of the direction that a philosophy of striving will take.

In metaphysics I can instance the work done by Mr. Canning Schiller in his essay "Axioms as Postulates," and in certain of the essays in his *Humanism*. When Mr. Schiller says, "The world, as it now appears, was not a ready-made datum; it is the fruit of a long evolution, of a strenuous struggle . . . . it is a *construction* which has been gradually achieved" (*Personal Idealism*, p. 54), he is, I believe, enunciating a principle which is true and fundamental; though opinions may differ as to the way that principle is to be carried out in detail. In logic I may refer to my own essay, "The Logic of Pragmatism" (in the third volume of these *Proceedings*, N.S.), where I have attempted to show by examination of our chief logical functions and concepts "that the logician must take due account of the active side of life if he would interpret knowledge aright." In

ethics, so far nothing of the kind has been done; and therefore I may be pardoned if I try to indicate, so far as can be done in a few sentences, the general direction which a voluntarist theory of conduct would take. In the first place it would recognise the connection, for which evolutional moralists have contended, between morality and biological survival. Good morality has been valuable in the struggle against nature, and still more so for purposes of social co-operation. Were it otherwise it is hard to see how morality, as we know it, could ever have developed at all, or how it could maintain itself even now. But important as this is, it is hardly of the essence of the matter; for this is biological striving, not moral. It would be for the voluntarist moral philosopher to show that striving enters into the very essence of morality; that moral sentiments are kept alive only so far as they are brought into effective operation; that ideals are made by the person who has them, that they represent his working principles of conduct and change with his spiritual growth or decay; that maxims, customs and institutions bear a similar relation to the moral consciousness of society; that the end itself, the richer and better experience which morality affords, is an active energetic experience, not a quiescent blessedness; and that, in sum, the best moral life is not an affair of passive obedience, but is as much an individual creation as good poetry.

The hostile influences that oppose voluntarism may be termed comprehensively the Passive Fallacy; by which I mean the tendency to ignore the kinetic and dynamic aspect of the world and of man. To trace the rise and development of the Passive Fallacy would need a separate dissertation, but one may say shortly that it has been fostered by everything which has separated the life of study from the life of action. Normally, study and action are mutually indispensable, and the normal case of study is the attention we give to an object in preparation for operating on it. In primitive society we can hardly imagine study divorced from action; but with the rise of education and

an educating class a noticeable separation takes place. The Passive Fallacy might, indeed, be described as a disease of education. To enumerate fully all the causes of this disease would take too long, but among them may be mentioned the tendency of educators, in checking the natural precipitancy of the young, to forget that, though action should be made to wait on study, it is really the end of study; the mere professional prejudice of educators which makes them forget the subordinateness of their own speciality; the tendency of educational methods to grow obsolete, and therefore useless for practice; the difficulty of ill-educated laymen in checking educators and making them keep their teaching abreast of current utility; the preference of educators for obscure, difficult and uselessly recondite subjects as an easy mode of impressing pupils; the over-praise of docility in pupils due to the inability of educators to realise that their views can be superseded; the desire of educators to found schools of thought, due to the same tendency which makes religious thinkers desire to found churches; the minute specialisation of educators; their preoccupation with technique; their exaggerated estimate of the historical or "record" side of knowledge (as opposed to inventiveness and originality), because it is more tangibly estimated; the liking of pupils for the same, because it is more quickly rewarded; the reaction of educators against the philistinism of the world of action, more particularly its commercial side. All these causes, more especially the last half-dozen, are intensified by the concentration of education in academic societies; but we can trace their operation even from the days of Plato, and they finally result in a most unfortunate tendency to regard the life of study or contemplation as quite distinct from and superior to the life of action.

We find the influence of the Passive Fallacy in certain wide-reaching principles which admit or encourage an anti-dynamic interpretation of the world. Of these the most notable is Intellectualism, which, beginning with a general

emphasis on the thought-element of our nature, to the neglect of the rest, culminates in Panlogism, or the reduction of every side of our nature to some form of thought. Hardly less famous, and certainly more conspicuous just at the present moment, is Absolutism, which denies that the world can change because it is divine and perfect, and merges human individuality and activity in the One-and-All, thus degrading all motion and activity to an unreal appearance of an essentially passive Absolute. A third principle of the same tendency is Subjectivism, culminating in Solipsism. It is true that some subjectivist or solipsistic thinkers, like Fichte, have emphasised strongly the active side of experience, but it is certain that they occupy an inconsistent position. For without independently real objects on which to direct our activity we must beat the void without effect; and, moreover, all the stimulus which comes from interaction with the environmont—indispensable to activity as we know it—is lacking. In Hegel all three principles are combined; it is, in fact, to Hegelian influence that the Passive Fallacy mainly owes its predominance among ns.

In the present position of thought and of social conditions in general there is much to favour the recognition of the Philosophy of Striving. If it be true, as I have tried to prove, that it requires the combination of Idealism with the scientific doctrine of Development, we could not have had it till those streams of thought were ready for fusion. In the days when Green's influence was predominant at Oxford they flowed like rivers that join but will not intermingle. Those who began philosophy in the eighties will remember how, in passing from, say, the *Data of Ethics* to the *Prolegomena to Ethics*, they seemed to pass into another world, and how impossible it was to bring into one focus treatises which professed to deal with the same material. The idealists had no knowledge of or sympathy with science; and the scientific men had no philosophical training. And years had to elapse before the

deficiencies on both sides could be made good. Probably this would have been effected much earlier but for the rising influence of Hegelianism, which for a time carried men's minds off in quite another direction.

And apart from the philosophic position there is in the general social condition of the time much to encourage the line of thought which I am advocating. There is a Passive Fallacy in practical conduct as in speculation, and anything that encourages us to discard the one suggests the discarding of the other. Now I hope I shall not lay myself open to the charge of optimistic exaggeration if I express the belief that the life of action is worth more and has a better chance of success just now than at most epochs in the past. The best form of striving is the realising of a fine ideal, and the chances of ideals are better than they used to be. Formerly they were Utopias, beacons lighted in a dark land, Republics that stimulated enthusiasm and imagination but never had the smallest chance of getting realised. Such ideals have a valuable, indeed a priceless, function; but even more encouraging to exertion are ideals which can be realised, of which, in the spheres of religion, politics and social improvement, there are no despicable number at the present time. And hence it results that practice, so to speak, is getting more and more mixed with ideality. A philosophy of striving is likely to be increasingly acceptable to a society in which striving for good objects is common and has no small chance of success.